
December 20, 2021

Dear County Staff and Supervisors,

North Tahoe Fire, on behalf of Meeks Bay Fire (with whom we are operationally consolidated), is presenting the following Request for Funding to facilitate the annexation process of merging Meeks Bay Fire Protection District into the North Tahoe Fire Protection District.

North Tahoe Fire Protection District (NTFPD) is an all-risk service provider that protects various unincorporated communities within two counties on the north and west shores of Lake Tahoe, and since 2014 has been operationally consolidated with the Meeks Bay Fire Protection District (MBFPD) in El Dorado County via a contract-for-service. As such, NTFPD employees protect 14 square miles, including extensive state park lands (841 acres), federal/forest service lands (1,244 acres) and beaches on the west shore of Lake Tahoe, from the Placer County line in Tahoma, through Meeks Bay, Rubicon, and Emerald Bay.

Under the contract-for-service, NTFPD personnel provide fire protection, rescue, emergency medical, hazardous material emergency, and ambulance response to over 2,300 (2,180 taxed) El Dorado County parcels with an assessed valuation of nearly \$1.3 billion dollars.¹

Thank you for considering our funding request.

Sincerely,



Steve Leighton, Fire Chief

North Tahoe Fire/Meeks Bay Fire Protection Districts

¹ County of El Dorado Auditor Certified Values by Tax Base, Tax Year 2021: <https://www.edcgov.us/Government/Auditor-Controller/proptaxreports/Documents/EqualizedAVsummary2021-22.pdf>

Request for Funding: Meeks Bay Fire Reorganization/Legal Unification

North Tahoe Fire's mission is to provide the highest possible level of fire, rescue, and advanced level emergency medical services to the communities we serve, including the Meeks Bay Fire service area. The Lake Tahoe region is a popular destination attracting 24+million² people each year for skiing, mountain biking, camping, water sports and other recreational activities. With the onset of the pandemic, the number of visitors skyrocketed, and local agencies continue to struggle to manage these impacts. While the district is not responsible for maintenance of parks, we are responsible to respond to the increase in calls for service for medical calls and back country rescue which are a result of increased use of parks, trails, and beaches. Our statistics for 2021 show we've already responded to an overall increase of 25% in calls for service as compared to the same time in 2020, and the Meeks Bay Fire service area specifically saw a 35% increase in calls for service in 2021 as compared to the same time in 2020.

Lake Tahoe is the most visited national forest in the state of California. At one-third the size of Yosemite, Lake Tahoe regularly saw three times as many tourists as Yosemite *before* the pandemic. With lodging and vacation home rentals in our service areas, our overall population increases from 15,000 fulltime residents to over 75,000 people during peak seasons (nearly five times the resident population) creating an additional 10-20% increase in calls for service. An analysis performed by Stantec using cell phone data purchased from Air Sage for three months in 2014 (Feb., July, and Aug.) arrived at a statistic of visitors entering the Tahoe Basin 24.4 million times. This number is at an 80 percent confidence level, meaning it can range from 19.5–29 million in any given year. The data also showed that winter and summer day use accounted for 42 to 43 percent of that figure, the balance of those entering staying at least one night. Emerald Bay, one of Tahoe's most visited sites, is in MBFPD's service area.

The district is geographically isolated and vulnerable to natural disasters, severe winter storms, avalanches, floods, landslides, wildland fires, and marine emergencies, leaving the region dependent upon local agencies for emergency incident response. Proximity to Desolation Wilderness and Lake Tahoe creates challenges with respect to specialized rescue service and marine-based emergencies, and the increase in the volume of roadway traffic causes problems with response to any incident.

Meeks Bay Fire Protection District (MBFPD) was officially formed in 1973. Prior to that, fire protection was provided as part of an El Dorado County Service Area. MBFPD encompasses 14 square miles on the west shore of Lake Tahoe. Recreational and residential uses are the principal land uses in the district. There are no industrial areas in the district; there are about 20 commercial operations, and a community park. MBFPD has an assessed valuation of over \$1.2 billion³. The full-time resident population is over 1,200, with an influx of over 10,000 part-time residents and visitors during the summer and winter seasons.

MBFPD is staffed with North Tahoe Fire safety staff per the *Operating Agreement for Providing Safety Personnel and Employee Association Unification*, and as such has no safety employees. The only MBFPD administrative employee recently retired, leaving no remaining MBFPD employees. The MBFPD Board of Directors currently has four Director positions filled, with one vacancy that has not been filled for some time.

At the December 8, 2021, MBFPD Board of Directors meeting, the Directors voted unanimously to approve Resolution No. 2021-12 regarding the LAFCO reorganization of Meeks Bay Fire Protection District into the North Tahoe Fire

² Standards of Coverage and Deployment Plan – 2018: <https://www.ntfire.net/standards-of-cover-2018>

³ County of El Dorado Auditor Certified Values by Tax Base, Tax Year 2021: <https://www.edcgov.us/Government/Auditor-Controller/proptaxreports/Documents/EqualizedAVsummary2021-22.pdf>

Protection District. Reciprocally at the December 7, 2021, NTFPD Board of Directors meeting, the Directors voted to approve Resolution 23-2021 regarding the LAFCO reorganization of Meeks Bay Fire Protection District into the North Tahoe Fire Protection District. These Resolutions represent the first step in pursuing reorganization and annexation of Meeks Bay Fire Protection District into the North Tahoe Fire Protection District.

At the October Board meeting, the MBFPD Directors also voted unanimously to transfer jurisdiction to process the annexation from El Dorado LAFCO back to Placer LAFCO. Previously on March 10, 2021, the Placer LAFCO Commission had transferred the lead LAFCO responsibility for the reorganization to El Dorado LAFCO. Placer LAFCO processing the annexation process is also supported by Government Code 56066 as Placer County is considered the “Principal County” due to having the greater portion of assessed value between the two districts.

On behalf of MBFPD, North Tahoe Fire is requesting funding assistance with the possible Legal Unification and reorganization process initiation, which includes project costs estimated by LAFCO staff. This funding request would only be for actual costs. The funding would address the components that include the LAFCO Application, LAFCO Staff Time, LAFCO fees, development of the Plan for Services required by Government Code/LAFCO, GIS mapping for the Board of Equalization, Community Workshops, and Public Outreach.

We are grateful for your consideration of funding this potential reorganization and are hoping that you can consider our request as well as the 2017 El Dorado County Grand Jury report #17-04, Finding F3⁴ and the *El Dorado County’s Strategic Plan*⁵ that specifically cites supporting Fire District’s reorganization and consolidation as a priority in reviewing this proposal.

“F3. The Board of Supervisors, in conjunction with LAFCO, is best positioned to champion fire agency consolidation.”

We also recognize that the Board of Supervisors demonstrated support of fire agency consolidation as described in the same report.

“The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding. However, the County and LAFCO cannot effect consolidation alone. Efforts at agency consolidation can only be successful with interest from potentially affected fire districts, sufficient support from the community, and with dedicated leader to coordinate the effort.”

The anticipated budget for the Reorganization/Legal Unification is \$42,000, which is a substantial barrier for both district(s). The cost breakdown for the Reorganization/Legal Unification is as follows:

NTFPD/MBFPD Legal Unification Process Initiation Budget	
LAFCO Application	\$ 5,500.00
LAFCO Staff Time and Fees	\$ 16,000.00
LAFCO Plan for Services	\$ 16,000.00
GIS Mapping	\$ 3,000.00
Community Workshops/Public Outreach	\$ 1,500.00
Total	\$ 42,000.00

⁴ County of El Dorado Civil Grand Jury Report #17-04, Fire Protection Consolidation:

<https://edcgov.us/Government/GrandJury/Documents/2017-2018%20Reports/Fire%20Protection%20Consolidation.pdf>

⁵ El Dorado County Strategic Plan: <https://www.edcgov.us/Government/CAO/StrategicPlan>

Timeframe: According to LAFCO staff, the formal unification process should take approximately 12 months, dependent on application details and LAFCO's workload. El Dorado LAFCO is currently completing a Municipal Service Review for all El Dorado agencies including MBFPD, that should conclude Spring of 2022. NTFPD is also completing a Sphere of Influence map amendment with Placer LAFCO. Both actions may add some time to the overall timeline.

Fiscal Logistics: If this funding request is approved, NTFPD would invoice County staff with actual costs related to the reorganization process. Any overages to the NTFPD/MBFPD Legal Unification Process Initiation Budget would be borne by the district(s).